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The Baltimore Interfaith Hospitality Network

The goal of an Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) is to provide families experiencing homelessness with basic human needs- shelter, safety, and sustenance-with a spirit of warmth and hospitality. In the IHN program, houses of worship provide space for overnight accommodations; congregations supply volunteers; and social service agencies assess and refer families to the program. Each Network employs a director who manages the program and assists the families in their search for housing and jobs. The Interfaith Hospitality Network enables communities to work together to address the needs of families experiencing homelessness. Providing shelter, meals and comprehensive services, the IHN helps families achieve lasting self-sufficiency.

Basic Network Components

- 1. Host Congregations-** Typically about 13 houses of worship form a Network, each prepared to accommodate up to 14 people for a week at a time on a rotating basis. In this way, a given congregation hosts for just 1 week every 2 to 3 months. Guests stay at the host site from 5:30 PM to 7:00 AM. The congregation provides dinner, accommodations for the night, and a breakfast and a bag lunch in the morning.
- 2. Volunteers-** Volunteers provide the hospitality to run the Network. They prepare the dinners and breakfasts, set up the sleeping accommodations, stay with guests, and help with cleanup. Volunteers are recruited from each host congregation or nearby support congregations. Approximately 30 to 50 volunteers are involved in a variety of activities each host week.
- 3. Social Service Agencies-** Local agencies assess and refer guests to the Network program and work with the Network director to coordinate needed services for guest families.
- 4. Day Center-** During the day, families receive case management at a central location near housing and employment opportunities. The Day Center is often housed in a Y or downtown congregational facility.
- 5. Transportation-**The Network provides transportation between the host congregations and the day center.
- 6. Fundraising-** Funds are needed for fixed costs such as the director's salary, day center rental fees, and transportation. Start-up funds will also be needed to equip congregations with the necessary supplies to accommodate families.

Benefits

For Guests: Safe, homelike shelter where families can stay together.

For Volunteers: Opportunity to help families experiencing homelessness directly, to make a difference.

For Congregations: Opportunity for outreach ministry (within the congregation's own facilities) focusing on the needs of people in the community

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